Preface

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Scope

The Topical Research Intern Program provides the opportunity for Service members and Departments of Defense (DoD) and Transportation (DoT) civilian employees to work on a diversity/equal opportunity project while on a 30-day tour of duty at the Institute. During their tour, the interns use a variety of primary and secondary source materials to compile research pertaining to an issue of importance to equal opportunity (EO) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) personnel, supervisors, and other leaders throughout the Services. The resulting publications (such as this one) are intended as resource and educational materials and do not represent official policy statements or endorsements by the DoD, DoT, or any of their agencies. The publications are distributed to EO/EEO personnel and senior officials to aid them in their duties. To reach the widest audience possible, the publications are posted on the Internet at: https://www.patrick.af.mil/deomi/deomi.htm.

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and should not be construed to represent the official position of DEOMI, the military Services, or the Departments of Defense and Transportation.

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Introduction

Treat all men alike. Give them the same law. Give them an even chance to live and grow. All men were made by the same Great Spirit Chief. They are all brothers. The earth is the mother of all people, and all people should have equal rights upon it…We shall all be alike – brothers of one father and one mother, with one mother, with one sky above us and one country around us, and one government for all. Then the Great Spirit Chief who rules above will smile upon this land, and send rain to wash out the bloody spots made by brother's hands from the face of the earth. For this time the Indian race are waiting and praying. I hope that no more groans of wounded men and women will ever go to the ear of the Great Spirit Chief above, and that all people may be one people. In-mut-tooyaa-lat-lat (Chief Joseph) has spoken for his people.

Chief Joseph, Nez Percé

This booklet will discuss various aspects of Indian culture as they relate to the 2002 American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month theme *Honoring Life, Honoring Elders, Honoring Heritage*. The term Native American, American Indian, and Indian are used throughout interchangeably. Theories of the arrival of Indians in North America, family structure, values, traditions, contributions they have given to the world, to the military Services, famous Native Americans, and current interest topics such as the Navajo code talkers will be discussed. Quotes from Indians are used to give the reader the perspective of seeing the topics "through Indian eyes."

In the excerpt by Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé, one can sense the essence of the Indian respect for life of one's fellow man. This spirituality also includes animals, the land, and all other living things. As Harold Driver points out in his book *Indians of North America,* "Animals and human beings were spiritually equated by the Indian as they are physically equated by biologists today." A sympathetic involvement with nature instead of an adversarial relationship is a central tenet of Indian life. It is a belief shared by most of the diverse tribes of American Indians. If one is out of balance with the environment or the harmony with nature is disturbed, sickness, misfortune, or death could occur. Life after death was in fact, considered as a continued existence in another world. The Hidatsas of the Plains believed that a person ready to depart to the spirit world could carry messages to those who had recently passed to that realm.

Most Indian tribes have always been governed by a deep faith in spiritual or supernatural forces. Every manifestation of nature possessed its own spirit through which the individual could establish contact through either his or her spirit or that of an intermediary. Dreams and vision quests were means to contact personal guardian spirits. This combined supernatural force shaped and directed life. The Iroquois called it *orenda,* the Algonquians *manitou,* and the Sioux *wakan.* Indians consulted the spirit world at every important milestone of their lives.

Dr. Alvin Josephy states in his book *500 Nations*:

The Iroquois (like many Indians) believed that the spirits of all humans were joined to those of the objects and forces of nature, and in addition, that a human's inner spiritual power, called orenda combated the powers of evil that could harm the individual as well as the rest of the people. Although an individual's orenda was small, it contributed to the total orenda possessed by a family, group, or clan.

Anthropologists and social scientists use the word *culture* to refer to the entire way of life of a people, not just their art, music, or literature. The great diversity of languages spoken in Pre-Columbian North America has been estimated around 500, but, may have numbered as high as 1,000. This was greater than all the rest of the world combined. Many were closely related, while others were of distinct language groups. Major John Wesley Powell, explorer and later director of the Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution, created a classification system of Indian languages north of Mexico in 1891. He grouped them into 56 linguistic families with the four principal subdivisions of Algonquian, Iroquoian, Athabaskan, and Siouan. (21:14) Therefore, when one spoke of a trait of Indians in general, it did not mean that it was uniform throughout the continent or even from tribe to tribe. Some neighboring tribes spoke remotely related or completely different languages. Cultural differences often coincided with differences in language. Each tribe had its own words to describe

themselves. Christopher Columbus universalized this by coining the term *Indian* when he arrived in the Americas. Thinking that he had found a route to India, he called the first indigenous people he encountered *los indios*.
The following is a quote from Tall Oak of the Narangansett tribe:

When the first Europeans arrived, Columbus and his crew, he came and called us Indians, because he thought he was lost in India. But what did we call ourselves before Columbus came? That's the question so often asked. And the thing is in every single tribe, even today, when you translate the word that we each had for ourselves, without knowledge of each other, it was always something that translated to basically the same thing. In our language it's Ninuog, or the people, the human beings. That's what we called ourselves. So when the Pilgrims arrived here, we knew who we were, but we didn't know who they were. So we called them Awaunageesuck, or the strangers, because they were the ones who were alien, they were the ones that we didn't know, but we knew each other.

Tall Oak, Narragansett

The name Indian has taken hold even though many indigenous people call themselves by other names. When addressing Native Americans, it is advisable to ask them how they prefer to be addressed. The Navajo, for example, call themselves *Diné Bikéyah* (People of the Land). The Cherokee call themselves *Keetoowah,* which means the principal people or the chosen ones in their language. The name Cherokee came from the Choctaw word meaning inhabitants of the cave country. Others like to use the name of their tribe. Still other tribes prefer to cast off the names that English, French, and Spanish explorers called them. For example, the Sioux prefer Dakota, Lakota, or Nakota, and the Ojibwa (Chippewa) often call themselves *Anishinabe*, which is their native name in the Algonquian language. In most languages, it roughly translates to the same concept: the people or human beings.

Arrival in North America

The question of whether Indians evolved in the Western Hemisphere or came from some other area of the world has long intrigued the White man ever since the first contact. Since no remains of a pre-*Homo sapiens* man has ever been excavated in either North or South America, most scientists agree that the earliest inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere crossed the land bridge between Siberia and Alaska at least 12,000 to 20,000 years ago. During the ice age, much of the ocean water became frozen in great icepacks. Water levels receded to 300 feet lower than they are today exposing the existence of a land bridge. This stretch of land, now referred to as Beringia, could have covered an area of 1,000 miles from north to south. This area is now covered by the Bering Straight and neighboring seas. Scholars from the period of first contact, sought to explain the existence of the Indians from their perspective of the world. Biblical as well as mythological explanations were offered. In his book, *They Came Here First*, D'Arcy McNickle writes:

Speculation about the origin of man in the New World was as fanciful as the tribal myths and legends. Different theories were advanced, beginning within a few years of Columbus' voyages. Columbus himself did not speculate on the matter, since he assumed he had reached the outer boundaries of Asia. The early writers were constrained by theological concepts that traced man's ancestry to Adam and Eve, through Noah and his offspring. The search for New World origins accordingly was at first confined to biblical interpretation, with embellishments from classical mythology. A tale attributed to Aristotle told of certain Phoenician sailors who sailed westward and disappeared into the Atlantic. The tale was resurrected after Columbus' voyage with the explanation that he had discovered the descendants of the lost mariners. In another account, Plato's fabled continent of Atlantis provided a land bridge over which people crossed to the Americas, where they were isolated when Atlantis was destroyed by an earthquake. A favorite theme, one which persisted into the nineteenth century, identified the Indians with the Lost Tribes of Israel, based on a supposed similarity between Hebrew and Aztec words and on certain customs and traditions said to be common to Jews and New World tribal people

In 1590, a Jesuit Priest named José de Acosta who had spent 17 years as a missionary in Peru and Mexico proposed the first scientific explanation for the presence of Indians in the Americas. His theory represented a quantum leap in thinking for his day. As stated in D'Arcy McNickle's book:

Writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries might recognize the inadequacies of their explanations, but, like men in any age, they were circumscribed by the intellectual concepts of their times. There were exceptions of course. Such an exception was José de Acosta, who in 1590 in Seville published the first of several volumes in which he argued that man and animals had crossed to the New World over a land bridge, the location of which was either in the South Seas, across from the Strait of Magellan, or off the northwest coast of North America. Acosta also reasoned that the migration of men and beasts was not accomplished as a single mass movement, but occurred over a period of time; and further, that the original migrants were nomadic hunters who in due course developed agriculture and a civil life of their own.

Indian tribes each have their own creation legend. The White man never seriously considered any of these stories as anything other than the myths of a primitive people. Due to scientific advances in the study of genetics in recent years, it is reasonably clear that Indians are of Asiatic stock. Their exact point of origin however, has not yet been determined. Attempts to determine the exact origin of Indians is a work in progress. In addition to the work of anthropologists and linguistics, serologists have determined that the blood types of pure Indians are consistent. Types A and B are almost completely lacking while type O is dominant. Finally, here is an alternative to the generally accepted scientific theory. Noted professor and author Vine Deloria, Jr., member of the Standing Rock Sioux offers an Indian perspective on the accepted origin theory:

The Bering Strait theory is tenaciously held by white scholars against the varied migration traditions of the natives and is an example of the triumph of doctrine over facts. Excavating ancient fireplaces and campsites may be exciting, but there were no well- worn paths which clearly show migratory patterns from Asia to North America, and if there were such paths, there would be no indication anywhere which way the footprints were heading. We can be certain of only one thing: the Bering Strait theory is preferred by whites and consequently becomes accepted as scientific fact. If the universities were controlled by the Indians, we would have an entirely different explanation for the peopling of the New World and it would be just as respectable for the scholarly establishment to support it. The theory does illustrate a constant theme…a good many scientific and/or scholarly beliefs about Indians originated as religious doctrines. As religion lost its influence as an opinion maker, the idea was picked up by some secular scholars, transformed into scientific theory, and published as orthodox science.

Honoring Life

A feature of tribal-oriented life vastly different from the life of the White man concerned land ownership. To the Indian, land and all its produce were free for the use of the group. The great Shawnee Chief, Tecumseh stated the philosophy of all Indians: "Sell a country! Why not sell the air, the clouds, and the great sea, as well as the earth? Did not the Great Spirit make them all for the use of his children?" One individual could not claim property for his or her personal possession or prevent others from using it. A tribe could claim land for its territory but the land was used communally. This difference in philosophy was perhaps the single most important reason for the clash of the two cultures. The White man was intent on settling the vast North American continent at all costs, while many Indian tribes considered the earth as the mother of all life and therefore impossible to reconcile with individual ownership. Native Americans consider all life as sacred. The earth was not an object to be exploited, but was considered as a life host, the Mother Earth. They believed that human beings, animals, plants, water, and stones shared the earth as partners. The following quote from Black Elk, sums up the Indian respect for life:

We should understand well that all things are the works of the Great Spirit. We should know that he is within all things: the trees, the grasses, the rivers, the mountains, and the four- legged animals, and the winged peoples; and even more important, we should understand that He is also above all these things and peoples. When we do

understand all this deeply in our hearts, then we will fear, and love, and know the Great Spirit, and then we will be and act and live as He intends.

Black Elk, Oglala Sioux

The cultivation and care of plants is a sign of the Indian respect for life. Indian healers knew the medicinal value of plants. Corn dances played a leading role in religious ceremonies of many tribes particularly in the southwest. The fact that modern man is not always a trailblazer is demonstrated in the following quote from author Vine Deloria, Jr: "In the schizophrenia that we know as America, Indians using songs and dances to improve crops is not significant, but a florist piping music into a greenhouse is astounding and illustrates a hidden principle of the universe." Animals in particular were thought to have helped create the human race. Indians believed they served as mentors who taught people the mysteries of the world. Therefore, as teachers, animals were in a sense considered superior to humans. Some like the bear were admired for their great strength and ability to walk on two legs like humans while others like the coyote and raven were renowned for their mischief. The Eskimo believed that the most precarious part of their existence was not the cold or threat of starvation, but the taking of life from other beings. (4:6) Hunters had to observe strict rituals of behavior and respect; otherwise, the animals would not present themselves as sacrificial offerings to the hunter. Indians have always used the emblems of animals in their dress such as feathers, claws, or skulls, to summon the spirit or strength of that animal. Crow and Blackfoot tribes covered their arrows with rattlesnake skins to allow them to strike with swiftness and many tribes used the image of the wolf, renowned for its predatory skills. Many animals in particular play important roles in Indian life. None was more important to the Indian than the buffalo. Every part of the buffalo was used to provide food, clothing, shelter, and tools. Buffalo once roamed the Plains of North America in the millions. Due to systematic extermination by the White man, its numbers were reduced to only 550 in the entire country by 1889. This life-giving animal was being slaughtered for sport and left to rot on the prairie. The near extermination of the buffalo was the downfall of the Plains Indian entire way of life. As Black Elk said: "Once we were happy in our own country and we were seldom hungry. For the two leggeds and the four leggeds lived together like relatives." The Indians of the Plains addressed their prayers to the buffalo spirit believing that the animal would serve as an intermediary with the Great Spirit. According to a Sioux legend, the sacred peace pipe was given to them by the White Buffalo Calf Woman, a beautiful maiden who taught the Sioux how to use the pipe then changed herself into a white buffalo calf. Thanks to conservation efforts in the United States and Canada, herds once again roam over the Plains. Although no longer as numerous, the animal is now safe from extinction. This mighty symbol personifies the American Indian. Its image is even used on the seal of the United States Department of the Interior of which the Bureau of Indian Affairs is part. Another animal revered by the Indian that is now the symbol of our nation is the eagle. It has long signified sacred power because of its ability to fly behind the clouds. "It has been associated with those spirits residing in the farthest reaches of the heavens that are in control of the elemental forces of nature: rain and wind, thunder and lightning." Warriors going into battle wore eagle feathers to bless them with endurance, quickness, ferocity, and sharpness of eye. Hunting of eagles was a spiritual endeavor permitted only to the most prestigious members of the tribe.

The following Native American proverb sums up the respect for life felt by all indigenous people: "Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children."(source unknown)

Honoring Elders

Family Structure

The organization of Indian life was based on the family and clan units. Clans were composed of people who traced themselves back through either the female or the male line to common ancestors. This common ancestor could be an animal, fish, reptile, vegetable, or a force of nature. Clan names were often derived from animals, also called totems, which were regarded as spiritual guardians. Animal names often reflected the wildlife indigenous to the particular region. The Seneca tribe of New York had eight clans with the popular names of Wolf, Bear, Beaver, Turtle, Hawk, Snipe, Deer, and Heron. The Creek tribe of the southeast had clan names of

Deer, Bear, Alligator, Panther, Raccoon, Wolf, Wild Potato, Eagle, Turkey, and supernatural beings called Wind People. Hospitality would be extended to Indians traveling in the region of a different tribe if they were of the same clan name. All southeastern region clans were matrilineal. Children automatically became members of their mother's clan. In Iroquois society, the man left home to reside in the house of his wife. He retained only a few personal possessions such as clothes and weapons. Women wielded such great power and authority that in the death of a male relative, they could demand compensation in the form of an enemy captive. A consistent trait among North American Indians was the prohibition on intra-clan marriage. Marriage within one's clan was considered incest. Among different clans, marriage was usually a simple exchange of gifts between families. Divorce was also a relatively simple procedure. A Cherokee woman could declare herself divorced by placing her husband's belongings outside the house. The divorced husband then moved back to his mother's house. Clans served to bind together groups that were often separated by considerable distances. In addition to unifying people spread out through larger regions, clans served as a deterrent from inter- village hostilities. Clan activities took up a large portion of daily life. In Indian societies, family and clan responsibilities often overlapped. Indian children were treated in an affectionate and gentle manner and were rarely physically punished. They were rarely disciplined by either the father or mother but instead by relatives from the extended family group such as aunts or uncles. The family was usually the primary source for education. Children learned proper conduct, skills, and responsibilities from aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, parents, and sometimes from other clan members.
In the words of one modern Pomo Indian:

In the old days before the white people came, the family was given the first consideration by anyone who was about to do anything at all. We had no courts, judges, schools. The family was everything, and no man ever forgot that. Each person was nothing, but as a group joined by blood, the individual knew that he would get the support of all his relatives if anything happened.

In addition to education, elders were the primary source of cultural, religious, and social values. The respect accorded them came not from their formal education but from their life experiences. The tribe always had a well-established sense of community where each member was valuable and contributed what he or she could. Children were taught to be industrious and scorn laziness as well as to emulate the courage of legendary heroes. Kindness and generosity were universal traits expected of the clan. With a renewed respect for Indian culture, modern child psychologists are reexamining the traditional Indian method of child raising and disciplining to determine the benefits for society.

Elders

Grandparents or other elders were particularly important in instilling values and traditions. This universal respect for elders was described by early-18th century explorer John Lawson, traveling among the Indians of the Carolinas, "Whensoever an aged man is speaking, none ever interrupts him, the company yielding a great deal of attention to his tale with a continued silence and an exact demeanor during his oration." Native Americans over 65-years-old number 165,000 plus and comprise more than 8% of the American Indian and Alaska Native population. They represent more than 50% of tribal groups nationwide and speak more than 150 different languages. They live in such diverse places as treaty-based reservations, state-reservations, executive-order reservations, government housing projects, and urban areas. Indian elders suffer many of the same discriminations as all elderly throughout society. Poor health care, desperate economic conditions on many reservations, and educational deprivations created an elderly population where nearly 12% have no formal education and many would be unemployable even if jobs were available on the reservation. Only 22% have completed high school. For a Native American who chose to remain on the reservation, it meant a life of poverty but also offered a level of comfort in familiar surroundings of family, friends, traditional ceremonies, and language. Perhaps the most compelling reason to remain on the reservation was the unquestioned acceptance of the elderly. The fast-paced existence outside the reservation offered little in the way of respect for tradition, community, and honor. Native Americans feel that the government of the United States has failed them in its responsibilities. As of 1987, Indian elders were:

- Unemployed at levels exceeding 80%, with unemployment reaching 95% on some reservations;
- Living in poverty on reservations at a rate of 61%;
- Living eight years less than the general population;
- Living in substandard, over-crowded reservation housing, 40% of which has been deemed unfit for occupancy;
- Receiving less than adequate health care;
- Served by Title VI nutrition programs at a rate of less than 19%;
- Served by area agencies on aging at a rate of less than 1% of total participants;
- Physically and mentally abused at an estimated rate of 30%; and
- Excluded from Social Security benefits at a rate of 57%.

Of all the grim statistics, perhaps the most disheartening is the 1986 study by the National Indian Council on Aging which found that Native Americans were 4.5 times more likely to die from alcoholism than the national average. When older people are no longer able to work or live on their own, the solution in modern society is to send them to a retirement or nursing home. Their care is seen as a burden rather than a responsibility. This is not true in most Native American communities. Elders have always been an integral part of the tribe. Most tribes considered aging as a sign of favor by supernatural spirits that allowed the person to acquire wisdom, knowledge of the world and the creatures in it, and tribal lore. The oral history of elders provided all the knowledge of Indians before the arrival of Columbus. Lakota Elder Matthew King-Chief Noble Red Man explains the indigenous concept of the elder this way: "The elders give spiritual direction to the People. The wisdom of thousands of years flows through their lips. In our Way, when we grow old, we become Elders." Serving as teachers and companions helped develop a close bond between children and their grandparents. The child who did not have a grandparent was considered unfortunate. In *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian*, the author, Joseph Brown, explains the close connection between children and their grandparents:

Many years ago, living with a very old Lakota Indian in South Dakota, I observed the manner in which he so closely related to little children. There seemed to be no separation. Asked how he understood the child, he replied, "The child is a person who has just come from the Great Mysterious, and I who am an old man am about to return to the Great Mystery. And so in reality we are very close to each other.

Tribal lore such as migrations, myths, and conflicts with enemies were related orally. Elderly people adept in storytelling were often invited guests in the evening. Elders today who are fluent in the tribal languages are especially important in the preservation and transmission of tribal culture. In his book, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, author Jerry Mander writes:

For young people, the elders are windows to the roots of their own identity, to the visions of Earth and life that came before modern times. The sharing of knowledge between the elders and the young is what makes survival possible…That white folks have a hard time accepting this is logical, since the concept is as alien as the people who speak of it. And yet it behooves us to at least entertain the idea of a living planet, a concept that has endured for millenia, just might be true.

Cherokee elders used their status to restrain young warriors from acting in a way that would endanger a tribe's population. The elder power of persuasion helped the tribe arrive at unanimity of decision or at least an agreement on the proper course of action. This maintained harmony as well as safety in the tribe. Leadership in a tribe was determined by whether the tribe was on a peacetime or wartime posture. Elders were replaced in the time of war by a kind of martial law. A mature man chosen for his fighting and leadership qualities became the war captain. At the end of hostilities, he relinquished his authority back to the chief and his council of elders. The following passage is typical of the sage advice offered by Indian elders. It expresses the wisdom passed down through the ages.

The man who came was from the government. He wanted to make a treaty with us, and to give us presents, blankets and guns, and flint and steel, and knives.
The Head Chief told him that we needed none of these things. He said, "We have our buffalo and our corn. These things the ruler gave to us, and they are all that we need. See this robe. This keeps me warm in winter. I need no blanket." The white man had with him some cattle, and the Pawnee Chief said, "Lead out a heifer here on the prairie." They led her out, and the Chief stepping up to her, shot her through behind the shoulder with his arrow, and she fell down and died. Then the Chief said, "Will not my arrow kill? I do not need your guns." Then he took his stone knife and skinned the heifer, and cut off a piece of fat meat. When he had done this, he said, "Why should I take your knives? The Ruler has given me something to cut with."
Curly Chief (Pawnee), ca. 1860

Honoring Heritage

Contributions

Many significant Indian contributions are present in everyday life. Street names, rivers, and the state names in America are mostly derived from Indian words. Some examples are: Alaska from the Aleut word *Alakhskhakh* meaning Alaska peninsula, Nebraska from the Omaha language word *nibdhathka* meaning flat river, and the Dakotas from the Dakota language word *dakhota*, meaning friendly ones.

Agriculture

Agricultural contributions of the indigenous peoples of the Americas are particularly noteworthy. Of the world's food supply, nearly half the crops produced were first domesticated by American Indians and became known to White men only after 1492. It is difficult to imagine the world's food supply without two great contributions domesticated by Indians: corn and potatoes. Along with rice and wheat, these are the principal staples of many diets. When the Spaniards arrived in the Andes region in South America, they found the Incas producing a wide variety of potatoes. Small plots of land were producing high yields of crops. The Incas prized diversity in a myriad of sizes, colors, shapes, and textures. Even potatoes that were too bitter for human consumption served as excellent animal fodder. This diversity not only served as a variety for the palette but in case of a blight ensured that other species would be available. Later, when the potato had taken hold as a staple in Ireland, the severity of the famous potato blight of the 1840's may have been considerably lessened had the Irish experimented with a variety of species like the Incas. Andean farmers were the first people to perfect a method of freeze-drying potatoes for long periods of storage. The potatoes were placed out in the freezing, high-altitude night air; and the following day were thawed in the sun. Farmers would then walk on the potatoes to press out the moisture. After several repetitions of this process, the potato dried into a form similar to plastic foam. This dried form weighed considerably less and was easily transportable for storage for five to six years. It was reconstituted by soaking in water and then cooked. The Incas also used this drying technique on meat. The dried meat was called *charqui* in Quechua. This word from Quechua later became the English jerky. The North American Indians also dried meat (usually buffalo or venison) and pounded wild berries and animal fat into it to produce a highly nutritional jerky called *pemmican*. This sustained many tribes in the colder climates throughout the winter months when fresh game was scarce. Its easy portability enabled the Indian to travel lightly for extended periods. Europeans preferred grains such as wheat and rice which were much more susceptible to adverse climatic conditions. The Indian preference for tubular roots such as the potato allowed them to produce more food and nutrition per acre than the European. The importance of the potato as a staple is illustrated in the following passage from Jack Weatherford:

A field of potatoes produces more food and more nutrition more reliably and with less labor than the same field planted in any grain. Even today, a hectare of land planted in potatoes produces 7.5 million calories. The same land planted in wheat produces only 4.2 million calories. The cultivation of potatoes also consumes far less calories or energy than does that of wheat. This means that each farmer could produce more hectares of food per worker, or that some of the workers could be freed for other tasks.

Indians also developed two other roots that are leading staples today: *manioc*, a tubular root that is a staple in many African nations, and the American sweet potato. More than 80 other plants including peanuts, squashes, peppers, tomatoes, avocados, cacao, and various beans were first cultivated in the New World.

Medicine and the Medicine Man

Native American medicine has also had a profound impact on civilization. Coca, from which both cocaine and novocaine are derived, cinchona bark from which quinine is derived, and ephedra, a nasal remedy, are contributions from the New World. Many other plants from the Amazon region of South America form the basis of modern pharmacology. Countless other potentially significant herbal cures remain to be discovered among indigenous tribes in both South and North America. Despite the vast availability of cures, Indians were unable to use their medicines against the onslaught of unknown diseases brought from the Old World. At the time of first contact, smallpox, bubonic plague, yellow fever, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, typhoid, measles, and other diseases were unknown to Indians. Indians suffered population losses of up to 90% of many tribes. In many instances, diseases preceded the actual arrival of the White man. Such catastrophic losses decimated many tribes in a matter of weeks. The decimation of these tribes resulted in a loss of culture as many elders who preserved the oral tradition and collected knowledge of their people vanished. Although no precise figure is available, estimates of Indian population in the Americas in 1492 was more than 70 million. During the years of settlement, wars, and ravaging by diseases, the Indian population had declined to a startling 340,000. Some White explorers often ridiculed Indian medicine because it had no cures for recently introduced diseases against which they had no immunity. Others were astounded by the Indian use of herbs and plants. Among the southeastern tribes, the Cherokees and Seminoles were especially renowned for their natural remedies. One Englishman wrote of the Cherokee healers, “They have a great knowledge in applying herbs and plants, and seldom if ever fail to effect a thorough cure.” The Cherokees thought that human diseases were devised by animals who were tired of human cruelty. Plants that were friendly to humans provided the cure for each disease. The healer sought to determine which animal had been offended in order to create an effective herbal potion from the correct plant. In addition to plants, potions were also made from parts of birds, animals, and insects. Some of these remedies were highly effective due to the intrinsic properties of the plants while others had no effect. The ineffective plants usually caused no harm and often had a placebo-like effect of calming the patient. The Seminoles believed that ordinary events could have extraordinary meanings and that common items could possess uncommon powers. The medicine man was the principal religious leader who preserved and taught the essential beliefs concerning people’s relationships with each other as well as with nature and the spirit world. In addition to serving as physician, the medicine man was expected to keep clan decisions in harmony with unseen powers. One of the most important ceremonies for the Seminoles and other tribes was the Green Corn ceremony held in June or July. The medicine man prepared the ground for the lighting of the sacred fire. Rituals, dances, and feasts were then held to purify the village for the eating of the ripening corn, to initiate young people into the community, and to invoke the spirits to bring happiness and prosperity to the people. This was also a time to forgive debts and crimes with the exception of murder.

Government

Several precepts of Indian tribal organization have made valuable contributions to the political philosophy later adopted by the founding fathers. Freedom and dignity of the individual were deeply ingrained traits of many Indian tribes. The Iroquois of the northeast were particularly organized in this respect. The Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas formed a confederacy of five nations known as the League of the Iroquois. This later became known as the Six Nations when the Tuscaroras joined them. In his book, *Indian Givers*, author Jack Weatherford explains how the confederacy functioned:

The Iroquois League united five principal Indian nations; the Mohawk, Onondaga, Seneca, Oneida, and Cayuga. Each of these nations had a council composed of delegates called sachems who were elected by the tribes of that nation….Each of these nations governed its own territory, and its own council met to decide the

issues of public policy for each one. But these councils exercised jurisdiction over the internal concerns of that one nation only; in this regard they exercised powers somewhat like the individual governments of the colonies. In addition…the sachems formed a grand Council of the League in which all fifty sachems of the six [sic] nations sat together to discuss items of common concern. The sachems represented their individual nations, but at the same time they represented the whole League of the Iroquois, thereby making the decisions of the council the law for all five nations. In this council each sachem had equal power and privileges, with his power dependent on his oratorical power to persuade. The council met in the autumn of at least one year in five in the longhouse in the Onondaga Nation; if needed they could be called into session at other times as well. Their power extended to all matters of common concern among the member nations.

The League's council was not always able to unite the tribes against enemies but did serve as an effective means of preventing inter-tribal feuds or conflicts. As the most powerful Indian confederation north of Mexico, its elements of democracy and representative government influenced Benjamin Franklin. While making his proposals for a union of the colonies at Albany in 1754, Franklin remarked that it would be strange if the league of Indian nations would prove more capable of forming a plan for a union than the English.

Sports

Indians have always been great lovers of sports. There were both spiritual and social connections between athletic endeavors and the cultural life of the tribe. There were many reasons to play games. They were played to honor the dead, to affect the weather, to placate spirits, or to ensure fertility of people or animals. Running had been an important activity among many people from the Incas of Peru to tribes in North America. It not only served as physical training, but also prepared the body for hunting or warfare. Runners also acted as messengers who carried information to distant villages. Messages were either carefully memorized or devices such as wampum (beadlike belts) were used as memory devices to accurately record the numbers of days or weeks before important events. Two sports that have become popular today, canoeing and kayaking can be credited to the North American Indians who invented the canoe and the Eskimos who invented the kayak. One of the most famous Native American sports is lacrosse. A variation called stickball was popular with several southeastern tribes such as the Creek and Choctaw. Lacrosse and other sports were sacred rituals viewed as a struggle between opposing forces of nature. The Cherokees observed elaborate rituals before the game, such as refraining from foods like rabbits and frogs that had brittle bones. Men also refrained from physical contact with women. Dances were held the night before a game. Before the start of the game, a ritual bloodletting of scratches on the limbs, rubbing the body with juice from a root, and bathing in the river completed the preparation. Players painted their bodies and usually wore the feather of a powerful animal such as the eagle or hawk. Sports served not only a spiritual need but also a social need. All tribal members regardless of social or economic standing were allowed to participate. Teams were based on ties of kinship and could include kin from neighboring villages. The sport reinforced the value of cooperation. An Indian lacrosse game could have a dozen or several hundred participants! A well-known Native American and perhaps the greatest athlete ever in North America was Jim Thorpe. The Associated Press Mid-Century Poll named Thorpe, a Sac, and Fox-Potawatomi Indian the greatest football player of the half-century. While a student at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School from 1904-1912, he lettered in 11 different sports: football, baseball, track, boxing, wrestling, lacrosse, gymnastics, swimming, hockey, handball, and basketball. In the 1912 Olympics, he won gold medals in the pentathlon and decathlon. He was subsequently stripped of his medals by the Amateur Athletic Union for having received $2 per day playing minor league baseball in 1909 and 1910. Replicas of the medals were presented to the family of Thorpe in 1983 and a large powwow was held at the 1984 Olympics to honor Thorpe and the return of his medals to his family after 70 years. Interestingly, gambling on sporting events was an integral part of athletic competitions. It did not carry the unsavory stigma now associated with it. Waging on the outcome of a competition did not diminish the spiritual value of the game. It was nearly universal and served to redistribute goods among tribal members and to reaffirm social ties. One sensitive topic when discussing Indians and sports is the subject of Indian mascots. Many Indians and non-Indians find the use of mascots and their associated names degrading to Native American heritage. They believe that the mascots perpetuate many racist stereotypes of Native Americans especially when dressed in war paint and ceremonial symbols such as

feathers, headdresses, and drums. As mentioned earlier, these symbols carry a sacred or spiritual significance to Native Americans. Many professional sports organizations, colleges, and schools are reevaluating their Native origin names.
The following is a chronology from *The Native American Almanac* of the mascot controversy since 1970 and some of the actions taken to rectify the situation:

- 1970-Dartmouth College, New Hampshire changed its nickname from Indians to Big Green.
- 1971-Marquette University, Wisconsin abolished its mascot, Willie Wampum.
- 1971-Mankato State College, Minnesota dropped its Indian caricature mascot but retained its Indian nickname.
- 1972-The Cleveland Indian Center filed suit in Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court, Ohio, objecting to Chief Wahoo, the Cleveland Indians baseball team mascot.
- 1973-University of Oklahoma dropped its Little Red mascot.
- 1978-Syracuse University, New York dropped its Saltine warrior mascot.
- 1978-Pekin High School, Illinois dropped its nickname Chinks and switched to Dragons.
- 1988-Siena College, New York dropped the team name Indians and replaced it with Saints.
- 1988-Saint John's University, New York retired its Indian mascot but kept Red Men as its nickname.
- 1988-Saint Mary's College, Minnesota dropped its Red Men nickname in favor of Cardinals.
- 1988-The American Indian Registry for Performing Arts called on the national Indian community to protest an ABC-TV program Wonder Years, which presented Indians as mascots for the show's high school team.
- 1988-Bradley University, Illinois retired its costumed Indian mascot.
- 1990-University of Illinois trustees voted to retain Chief Illiniwek as its mascot.
- 1991-American Indians protested outside the World Series games between the Atlanta Braves and the Minnesota Twins.
- 1991-National Congress of American Indians passed a unanimous resolution denouncing Indian nicknames.
- 1991-Eastern Michigan University changed its nickname from Hurons to Eagles.
- 1992-American Indians protested outside the Super Bowl XXVI.
- 1992-William Hilliard, editor of the *Portland Oregonian*, announced he would no longer publish Redskins, Redmen, Braves, and Indian team names.
- 1992-Columbus, Georgia Indians, a minor league team affiliate of the Cleveland Indians, changed its name to Redsticks.
- 1992-Michael Douglass, District of Columbia radio station manager of WTOP and WASH, announced that the stations would not use offensive names when referring to American Indians.
- 1992-Don Shelton, assistant sports editor at the *Seattle Times* announced that the Redskins, Redmen, and Red Raiders would no longer appear in headlines, photo captions, or quotes larger than the story.

No other ethnic group in the United States has so many visual reminders of mascots that can be construed as insulting to their heritage.

Native Americans and the Military

Native Americans have a long tradition of supporting the United States military. They fought bravely and loyally in every American war even before being granted citizenship by Congress in 1924. The Oneida and Tuscarora tribes of the Six Nations (Iroquois Confederacy) fought alongside the colonists in the Revolutionary War against the British. The Civil War found Indian tribes divided by geographical locations. Tribes of the southeast such as the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles sided with the Confederacy. United again, they participated in the Spanish-American War with some joining President Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders in the charge at San Juan Hill. Indians serve in the Armed Forces for the same reasons as other Americans. They wish to serve their country and community and to protect the rights, lands, and dignity of their respective tribes. In many Indian cultures, serving as a warrior was a path to manhood and a position of

honor in the tribe. Indian communities have traditionally supported their men and women warriors regardless of the policy that sent the m to fight. In World War I, nearly 12,000 Native Americans served as volunteers. This number increased dramatically in World War II where they served in all branches of the Armed Forces. The Snyder Act granted citizenship to American Indians in 1924, thereby making Native Americans eligible for the draft. However, the number conscripted does not alone account for the disproportionate number who served. More than 44,000 American Indians out of a total Native American population of less than 350,000 served with distinction in both the Pacific and European theaters. Native Americans have the highest per capita record of service when compared to other ethnic groups. In the Vietnam War, 42,500 served; 10,829 in the Army, 24,000 in the Navy, 2,450 in the Marines, and 5,237 in the Air Force. Many were decorated for bravery and distinguished service.
The Defense Manpower Data Center reported that as of March 2002, there were 15,547 American Indians/Alaskan Natives on active duty in the Services.

Service	**Number Of American Indians/Alaska Natives On Active Duty (March 2002)**
Army	3,917
Navy	7,578
Air Force	1,755
Marine Corps	1,592
Coast Guard	705

Language as a Weapon

One area where Native American expertise had been actively sought by the military was in the field of communications. Secure and rapid communications are imperative on the battlefield. Cryptography is the standard means of ensuring the enemy does not gain access to friendly communications. However, it consumes valuable time that in intense combat can result in tragic loss of life. During any voice transmission, the sender and receiver must assume the enemy is listening and that the code could be broken. Due to the complexities of Indian languages and their relative obscurity, the idea of using Indians as code talkers first came about during the closing days of World War I. Fourteen Choctaw Indians from the Army's 36th Division were instrumental in helping the American Expeditionary Force win several key battles in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign in France during the final big German offensive of the war. They were responsible for translating radio messages into Choctaw and sending them with runners between various companies to other Choctaws who translated them into English. The Germans captured about one in four of the runners but were never able to decipher the Choctaw language. Since these battles occurred near the end of the war, the Choctaws were never used again as code talkers. The first public recognition of these pioneer code talkers came in 1986 when Chief Hollis E. Roberts presented posthumous Choctaw Nation Medals of Valor to the code talkers' families. On November 3, 1989, in recognition of the vital role the Choctaw code talkers had in the Meuse-Argonne battles, the French government presented Chief Roberts the "Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Merite" (the Knight of the National Order of Merit). This is the highest order France can bestow on an individual. In World War II, Indians would again be called upon to use their languages in coded communications. The Army Signal Corps selected 17 Comanche Indians because of the uniqueness of their language. While trained in all phases of communications, these Indians were used primarily to transmit messages in their language. A famous code word used by the Comanches was posah-tai- vo, meaning crazy White man (used to identify Adolf Hitler). Since the Comanches had a word for airplane but not for a bomber, they devised the code word pregnant airplane when referring to bombers. The Army's 4th Signal Corps was commended by their commanding general in 1944 but, as with the Choctaws, recognition did not come to the Comanche code talkers until 1989 when three surviving members were also honored by the French government with the "Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Merite." The last surviving Comanche code talker, Charles Chibitty, was honored at a ceremony in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes on November 30, 2001. He was presented with the Knowlton Award that was created in 1995 by the Military Intelligence Corps Association to recognize significant contributions to efforts of the intelligence community. In 2002, the House of Representatives voted unanimously to honor Sioux Indians who also served as code talkers

in World War II in both the European and Pacific theaters. Only two of the 11 Sioux are still alive. Contributions made by various Indian tribes are finally getting the long overdue recognition they deserve. In 2001, President Bush honored the most famous group of code talkers, the Navajo, for their contributions in the Pacific theater while serving in the United States Marine Corps. The idea to use Navajo Indians as code talkers came from two people. The original concept came from the Commanding General, Amphibious Force, Pacific Fleet, Major General Clayton B. Vogel, United States Marine Corps. General Vogel had followed the Army's experiment with the Comanches with interest and curiosity. The attack on Pearl Harbor was the catalyst for investigating the use of Indian languages by the Marine Corps. General Vogel knew the Marines would be handling the bulk of the action in the Pacific against the Japanese. His idea was validated when a civilian, Philip Johnston, contacted Vogel's signal officer, Major James E. Jones. Johnston, the son of a missionary, was raised on a Navajo reservation. Subsequently, he was one of the rare, non-Navajos who could converse in the native language. Being a WW I veteran, Johnston was familiar with the Choctaw code talker's role in the war. He believed that Navajo would fulfill the Marine's military requirement of finding an undecipherable code for WWII. Johnston knew that Navajo, with its syntax, tonal qualities, and numerous dialects render it unintelligible to anyone not having extensive exposure to it. It was estimated at the outbreak of World War II, there were less than 30 non-Navajos who could understand the language. In McNickle's book, the complexities of Navajo are explained:

It seems almost as if the language were reduced to verb forms: forms used with infinite flexibility as to time or tense, mode of operation, direction of movement, duration of action, numbers, and identification of the speaker. To a Navajo Indian, evidently, it is of great importance whether an action takes place in the immediate instant and is done with, whether it occurs repeatedly, or customarily, or irregularly, or conditionally, or hypothetically, among many possible modes and aspects. One must suppose that the mind of the speaker of such a language has accustomed itself to viewing actions in multiple phases and the language reflects the habit of thought.

Johnston also convinced the Marine Corps that the Navajos were the only tribe that had not been infested with German students studying various tribal dialects under the guise of anthropologists or art students. He did not take into account that the languages of neighboring tribes such as the Apaches, Zunis, and Hopis shared the same common Athabaskan linguistic stock as Navajo. Luckily, the differences were too great for any spies to overcome. After demonstrations in which several Navajos transmitted English into Navajo and back into English, the Marine Corps authorized an official program to develop and implement the code. Twenty nine Navajo Indians fluent in both Navajo and English were recruited and sent to boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego. The first 29 were:
Charlie Begay
Roy Begay
Samuel Begay
John Benally
Wilsie Bitsie
Cosey Brown
John Brown
John Chee
Benjamin Cleveland
Eugene Crawford
David Curley
Lowell Damon
George Dennison
James Dixon
Carl Gorman
Oscar Ilthma
Dale June
Alfred Leonhard

Johnny Manuelito
William McCabe
Chester Nez
Jack Nez
Lloyd Oliver
Frank Pete
Balmer Slowtalker
Nelson Thompson
Harry Tsosie
John Willie
William Yazzie (25:39)
These original 29 code talkers constructed an alphabet to spell out words for which no code terms could be devised. Words were taken from nature that had logical connections with military terms and place names. For example, the code name for observation plane was ne-ahsjah, or owl. Besh- lo, or iron fish meant submarine. The Navajo word for America, Ne-he-mah meant our mother. By the end of World War II, the Navajos had developed 411 terms that frustrated gifted Japanese cryptographers. They were unable to decipher a single syllable from thousands of transmitted messages. Approximately 400 Navajos served as code talkers. They were assigned to the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions and participated in every major campaign in the Pacific. They called in air strikes, artillery bombardments, directed troop movements, and reported enemy locations. They distinguished themselves particularly in the battle of Iwo Jima, where the entire military operation was directed by orally communicated orders relayed by the code talkers. Working around the clock during the first 48 hours of the battle, they communicated 800 messages without error. They relayed the message that the Marines had raised the flag on Mt. Suribachi. They were praised for their performance on Iwo Jima by the Marine 5th Division Signal Officer, Major Howard Connor, who said, "Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima." The Navajo code was so successful that it was credited with saving the lives of countless Marines on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Iwo Jima, New Britain, Bougainville, Guam, Peleliu, and Okinawa. Each code talker was assigned a bodyguard who was ordered to protect the code at all costs. The code was such a valuable asset that it was classified for 23 years after the end of World War II. From the time they boarded a bus to attend communications school, the first 29 code talkers were never granted leave to go home until they were wounded or the war ended. After serving wherever they were sent without complaint, they departed the same way they enlisted: shrouded in secrecy. Upon declassification in 1968, the nation finally realized the valor and contributions made by these brave Americans.

Recognition of the Code Talkers

The first public recognition of the Navajo code talkers took place at the reunion of the 4th Marine Division in Chicago on June 28, 1969. They were honored in a parade through downtown Chicago followed by a banquet charged with emotion as their names were called for them to receive medallions for meritorious service in the field of communications. The second milestone in their recognition occurred on August 14, 1982, when by House Joint Resolution 444, Congress designated that date as National Navajo Code Talkers Day.
The proclamation by President Ronald Reagan reads as follows:

Proclamation 4954 -- National Navaho Code Talkers Day
July 28, 1982

By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation

Since the Revolutionary War, when General George Washington praised the Indians under his command, the United States has been privileged to have members of the Indian Nation serve in its armed forces.

From the bravery demonstrated at Valley Forge and the establishment of the U.S. Indian Scouts on August 1, 1866, to the present day, Native Americans have heeded the call to duty. Though often excluded from the annals of United States history, these people, nonetheless, have defended the only land they have ever known, asking for nothing more than opportunity in return.

The Navaho Nation, when called upon to serve the United States, contributed a precious commodity never before used in this way. In the midst of the fighting in the Pacific during World War II, a gallant group of men from the Navaho Nation utilized their language in coded form to help speed the Allied victory.

Equipped with the only foolproof, unbreakable code in the history of warfare, the code talkers confused the enemy with an earful of sounds never before heard by code experts. The dedication and unswerving devotion to duty shown by the men of the Navaho Nation in serving as radio code talkers in the Marine Corps during World War II should serve as a fine example for all Americans.

It is fitting that at this time we also express appreciation for the other American Indians who have served our Nation in times of war. Members of the Choctaw, Chippewa, Creek, Sioux, and other tribes used their tribal languages as effective battlefield codes against the Germans in World War I and the Japanese and Germans in World War II.

Beyond this unique role, American Indians serving in the United States military forces have established an outstanding record of bravery and heroism in battle. Many have given their lives in the performance of their duty. All Americans should recognize their record.

By House Joint Resolution 444, the Congress has requested me to designate August 14, 1982, as National Navaho Code Talkers Day.

Now, Therefore, I, Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate August 14, 1982, as National Navaho Code Talkers Day, a day dedicated to all members of the Navaho Nation and to all Native Americans who gave of their special talents and their lives so that others might live. I ask the American people to join me in this tribute, and I call upon Federal, State and local officials to commemorate this day with appropriate activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this 28th day of July in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventh.

Ronald Reagan

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 2:03 p.m., July 28, 1982]

On July 26, 2001, President Bush presents the Congressional Gold Medal to the last surviving original Navajo

Code Talkers who fought in WWII. (White House photo by Paul Morse.)

Conclusion

This booklet has sought to discuss several areas in connection with this year's theme of Honoring Life, Honoring Elders, Honoring Heritage. Native Americans have played a vital role in the great diversity of our nation. In conclusion, a statement from Edwin Embree in *Indians of the Americas* is quoted in Brian W. Dippe's, *The Vanishing American*:

> *Instead of trying to reduce all groups to the same pattern, we are now beginning to see the value of encouraging within one strong nation many different races and customs. Rather than a melting pot, America might be thought of as a great pageant of peoples. In such a pageant, the Indian in the future, as he has in the past, may play a brilliant and colorful role.*